

VZCZCXR06507

OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHNEH RUEHPW
DE RUEHKA #0489/01 1380540

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

O 180540Z MAY 09

FM AMEMBASSY DHAKA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8838

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0134

RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2101

RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RHHJJPI/PACOM IDHS HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 000489

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/17/2019

TAGS: PTER PINR BG

SUBJECT: BANGLADESH'S RAPID ACTION BATALLION NABS TOP
TERRORIST BOMB-MAKER

Classified By: CDA a.i. Geeta Pasi. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) has captured a man it describes as the chief bomb-maker of the domestic Islamic terrorist group Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). The arrest confirmed RAB's role as the most effective counterterrorism agency in Bangladesh. In recounting the capture, the RAB Additional Director General said he looked forward to greater counterterrorism cooperation with the U.S Government in the future. He assured EmbOffs that he understood RAB needed to meet certain human rights benchmarks before receiving counterterrorism training from the U.S. Government. He said he would do all he could to ensure the success of two U.S. Marshals coming to Bangladesh in June to help RAB put in place operational systems of accountability and transparency needed to meet those benchmarks.

THE CAPTURE OF BOMBER MIZAN

¶2. (C) The RAB captured a man it described as the leading JMB bomb-maker, Jahid Hossain Sumon, alias "Boma Mizan," the night of May 14 and hours later raided his house, where more than 40 grenades and other arms were seized. The action was significant, in part, because the JMB in 2005 unleashed a mass bombing campaign that terrorized the nation. RAB Additional Director General Col Rezanul Rahman Khan, who participated in the raid, said that the suspect was "absolutely an inner circle man" who had been with the JMB from its inception. Reporting from other Embassy agencies confirmed Boma Mizan was among the most wanted terrorists in Bangladesh. Boma Mizan told the RAB he met JMB chief Moulana Saidur Rahman just days before his capture. Khan said the RAB had taken Boma Mizan to several locations in an effort to track down Rahman, but so far the search had come up empty.

¶3. (C) In a blow-by-blow account of the raid, Khan described how Boma Mizan was able to warn his wife he was in danger by telling her the code words "I am sick" through the closed front door when RAB brought him to his house. Boma Mizan's wife then tried to hurl a grenade at the RAB officers but instead blew off her hand and injured her two young children because the RAB team had locked the front door from the outside. Khan said he then spent several hours imploring the wife to surrender so she and her two children could get medical attention, which she ultimately did. While Khan stressed RAB's efforts to avoid bloodshed in the raid, his account also revealed an unsophisticated operation that placed both the RAB officers and Boma Mizan and his family at greater risk than necessary. For example, taking Boma Mizan

to his house not only placed him in danger but also gave him an opportunity to warn his wife he was in trouble, which in turn endangered the accompanying RAB officers.

RAB REMAINS THE KEY CT PLAYER IN BANGLADESH

¶4. (C) Boma Mizan is just the latest of several JMB operatives rolled up by the RAB in recent months, confirming it remains at the forefront of Bangladesh's counterterrorism efforts. Khan said the RAB continued to have the JMB and another local Islamic terrorist group, the Harakat ul-Jihad-Islami-Bangladesh (HUJI-B), on the run. He said the RAB looked forward to receiving U.S. government training and assistance to further its counterterrorism efforts. EmbOffs again reminded Khan that such engagement will only come once RAB becomes more transparent and accountable on human rights issues.

CONCLUSION: A CRITICAL JUNCTURE OF ENGAGEMENT

¶5. (C) The latest RAB success underscores the critical role the organization plays in countering terrorism in Bangladesh. While there initially were questions about whether the new Awami League government would embrace the RAB, which was created by the rival Bangladesh Nationalist Party, it now appears the paramilitary force will maintain its leading counterterrorism role. In recent months, senior government

DHAKA 00000489 002 OF 002

officials frequently have stressed the need for all security agencies to end extrajudicial killings, which have tarnished RAB's reputation in particular; reported killings in shootouts involving RAB have plummeted during that time. To help ensure the trend continues and all shootout killings are investigated credibly, two U.S. Marshals are scheduled to work with RAB for three months this summer to put in place systems of transparency and accountability. That program will be a critical factor in determining whether RAB meets the human rights benchmarks to allow the U.S. Government to offer RAB counterterrorism training.

PASI